

Appendix D

Focus Group Report

Monday 25 June – Wednesday 27 June

At CILIP offices, 7 Ridgmount Street, London

- 1. Authors and Illustrators**
- 2. Publishers and Agents**
- 3. Librarians**

Background

In the final stage of consultation for the independent Diversity Review, CILIP conducted three focus groups with primary stakeholders in the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards:

- authors and illustrators
- publishers and agents
- librarians.

There were 8-10 participants attending each focus group. We invited one member of the Inclusive Minds Youth Ambassador Network to take part in each discussion. Inclusive Minds ambassadors are individuals that share a real interest in seeing better representation in children's books of one or more facets of diversity.

An independent diversity consultant facilitated the focus groups: Esua Goldsmith, Anona Development Consultancy.

The sessions were conducted under Chatham House Rules to ensure a safe space for open and honest discussion.

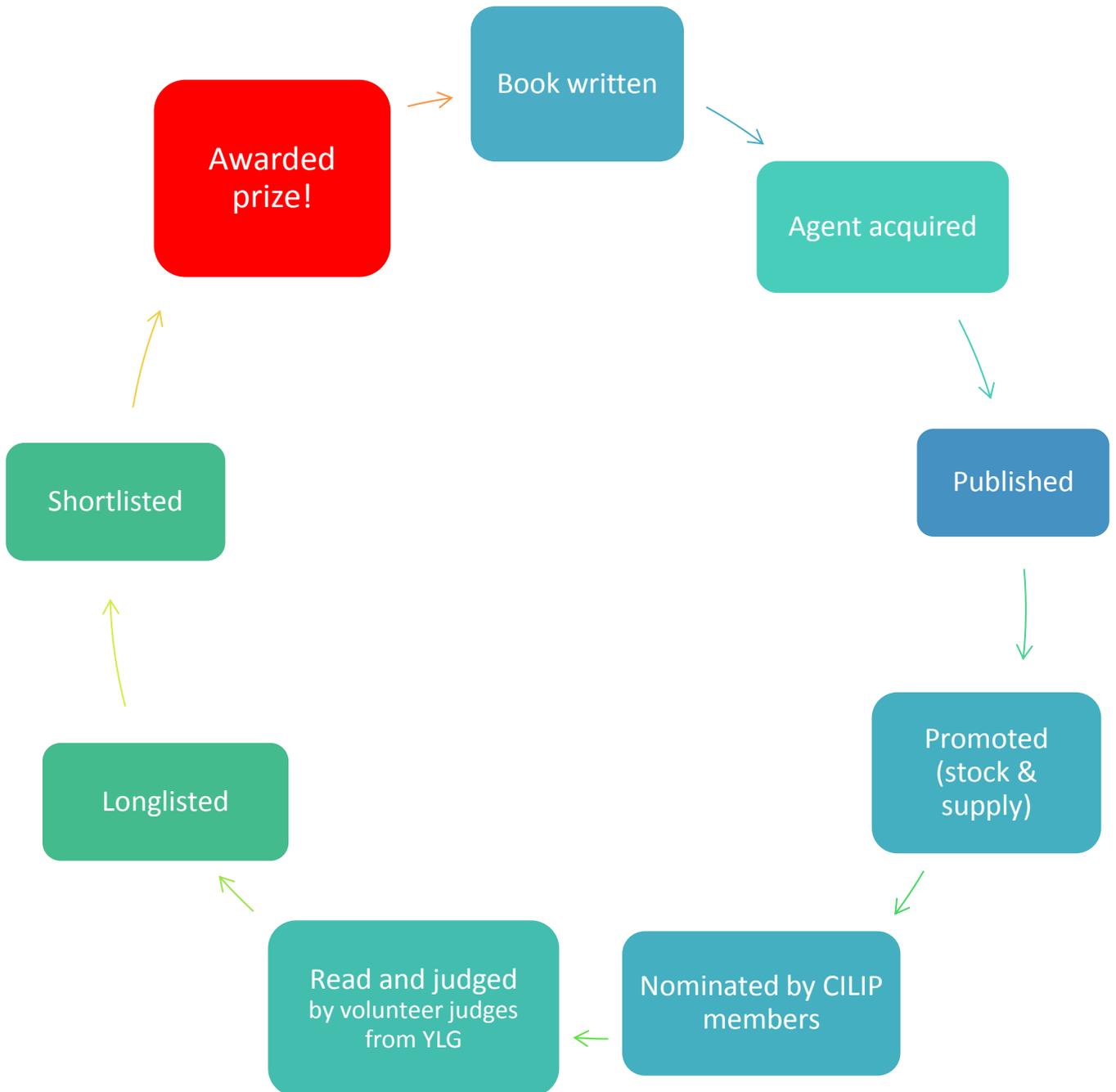
Introduction

Participants of the focus groups brought with them a positive energy as they engaged in honest and open discussion around the Awards internal processes and the wider book sector. There was a genuine desire for change and recognition of the opportunities to increase diversity, inclusivity and representation in the awards processes and shadowing scheme.

Method

Participants in each focus group were asked to consider the barriers/blocks to inclusion at each stage of the process illustrated in the diagram below and suggest solutions to unblock them.

Diagram



Key areas of discussion

- Quality and diversity should be integral and not treated as mutually exclusive
- Clarification needed on who the awards are for, what is their aim and why?
- Lack of diverse books and lack of access to or awareness of diverse books
- Rewarding a small pool of talent with authors repeatedly appearing on shortlists and/or winning the medals
- Judging panel – too mono-cultural and lacking diversity
- Judging is too big a job (time and capacity issues - to the detriment of each book being given fair and equal consideration)
- Criteria too subjective / too restrictive with no acknowledgment of diversity, inclusion, empathy or innovation
- Process is too exclusive (from the books being published, nominated, long/shortlisted and awarded the prize)
- Proposal to split the award between middle grade & young adult books
- Increase children’s involvement – make their vote count or introduce a children’s choice

Focus Group Outcomes

Below are a list of outcomes common to each focus group listed under each stage of the process in the diagram.

Process	BLOCKS	SOLUTIONS
Written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time ○ Money – no income guarantee ○ Energy ○ Not seeing yourself as a writer ○ ‘You cannot be what you cannot see’ (self-exclusion as well as social exclusion) ○ Not an accessible career choice – not an aspirational choice for young people ○ Diverse authors can be expected to write about issues of diversity e.g. racism ○ Perception that writing a diverse or issue book is in conflict with writing a commercial book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional author visits – kids seeing writers from their region succeeding ○ Form alliances with organisations that are more diverse such as POP UP ○ Post-code mapping to look where shadowing is taking place ○ More school visits by librarians and publishers as well as authors ○ Shadowing schools: cost barriers to taking part could be overcome by offering free books e.g. to special measures schools / low literacy areas - ensure wider participation from more naturally diverse schools/kids

<p>Agent acquired</p> <p>Published</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of diversity and representation in agents and publisher workforce ○ Low pay and high education required for entry ○ London-centric industry ○ Affordability of agent ○ Smaller publishers have less money to invest in editorial process ○ Diverse people self-publish and miss out on editorial support ○ Danger of diversity seen as tick box exercise or treated as latest 'trend' in publishing – it is not a trending issue – we need sustained and systemic change ○ Lack of risk-taking or imagination ○ Bound by sales – following the money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agents need to get out there more to find talent beyond writer's conferences ○ Stop blame cycle – more partnerships and conversations between publishers and agents i.e. 'we are looking for XXX' - Collective support ○ Agents and publishers from bigger and smaller houses should meet more regularly – opportunities for working together ○ Publisher, author, librarian visits to schools outside London – kids seeing writers from their region succeeding or see how the industry could be open to them ○ Encourage kids to look at and consider the industry – match shortlisted publishers to shadowing schools to put on open days ○ Need to invest in writers to help them develop their craft - Raw ideas can be nurtured
<p>Promoted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Librarians mostly buy from suppliers where stock selection is not diverse enough ○ Impact of unconscious bias on stock selection ○ Sales teams are not supporting diverse books particularly representation in picture books - ○ Reps have gender bias / unconscious bias ○ Diversity of book or creator either hidden or treated as marketing tactic – marketing the identity of the creator rather than the book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Go beyond mainstream library suppliers when looking for book stock ○ Educate on commerciality of diverse books ○ Focus on new writers and not just promoting more established names
<p>Nominated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to librarianship is restrictive in terms of level of education required and low pay ○ You have to be a CILIP member to nominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CILIP to offer bursaries to people in underrepresented backgrounds to encourage entry to Library and Information science further education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cost of CILIP membership could be excluding ○ Librarians are not a diverse group so awareness of diverse books may be restricted ○ Nominations are based on criteria that is restrictive – focus on literary merit overlooks the craft that goes in to making books or illustrations, particularly the middle grade books that are carefully crafted for younger readers ○ Criteria does not mention diversity ○ Question of who reviews the criteria? How often? ○ Does not mention children’s reading pleasure – who are the awards for? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review criteria – it needs more clarity – needs to be decolonised ○ CILIP to curate and provide database of diverse books including new and upcoming writers ○ Advertise in Information Professional the books that are eligible to be nominated ○ Each region of CILIP YLG should have a team that looks at alternative publishing, small presses ○ CILIP or YLG circulate newsletter detailing books eligible for the prize – a curated list containing diverse writers/illustrators and profiling indie publishers ○ Could children nominate? ○ Bring in a children’s judging panel at a later stage e.g. longlisting? ○ Give children a choice ○ Give evidence in nominating of children’s interest in the books
<p>Read and judged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you maintain literary merit, commerciality and inclusivity? ○ Capacity issues – librarians access to becoming a judge is limited by access to profession, time to give to volunteer role ○ Too many books to read = undoable ○ Is it a bubble of the same people – talking among themselves and not more widely ○ Subjectivity of the criteria How is the criteria followed? Some people may stick rigidly to the criteria but others may use them as looser guidelines – unclear if it is a checklist or framework ○ How will you know if factual information presented is accurate and clear? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invite nominations from diverse organisations and other relevant bodies e.g. SLA, School Libraries Network, Inclusive Minds ○ More collaboration between YLG and SLA ○ Librarians attend spaces outside of their comfort zone such as Bare Lit ○ More panels, More readers, More judges ○ Criteria needs reviewing including ‘does book reflect community it represents?’ ○ External input on criteria is needed ○ Introduce one or two co-opted judges onto the panel from diverse backgrounds ○ Invite more than 1 judge from each region for greater

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are the characters believable and convincing? ○ Is their behaviour and speech consistent with their known background and environment? ○ If judging panel is non-diverse they might miss the nuance that makes it a great book 	<p>representation on the judging panel – a group per region to share the role = more likely to have diverse representation and more doable job</p>
<p>Longlisted Shortlisted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where/how do you demonstrate you have listened to children in the decision making process? ○ Does not recognise the books that get kids reading ○ CKG books perceived as shelf-sitters ○ Same authors appearing year on year ○ Kids find it samey ○ Too much YA focus, not giving enough books to MG readers who primarily shadow the scheme Yr 7-9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exclude or put a limit on eligibility of previous winners to open the prize to fresh and new material/talent ○ Consult with children at this stage ○ Prize splitting MG and YA
<p>Awarded prize</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Same authors getting picked repeatedly ○ Prize seen as elitist – genre snobbery ○ Lack of young people’s choice reflected here ○ Why are young people not judging or awarding alongside librarians? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs to be space for recognising new talent and emerging writers ○ Children given a vote that counts toward overall winners Or a shadowing prize